

TRANSFORMING THE TAR HEEL STATE

THE LEGACY OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN NORTH CAROLINA

Historical Facts about Wake County Public Library

Compiled by Dale Cousins

Library Established

1901

Notable Librarians

Miss Jennie Coffin was Wake County's first librarian. She started working at the library in 1901. Miss Coffin lived (and died) in an apartment in the Olivia Raney Library building (1917).

First Bookmobile

In 1942, the Works Progress Administration (WPA) funded a bookmobile and its library clerk. It operated from the Olivia Raney Library for white residents 12 school days of the month and from the Richard B. Harrison Library for African American residents 8 days a month. The bookmobile itself was a truck with flip-up sides.

Important Facts

The *News and Observer* reported at the opening on January 24, 1901 that the library "drew an audience representative of the best thought and life of the capital city, augmented by State Officials and their families and visitors from all parts of the State."

Wake County assumed full financial responsibility for all county libraries in 1985. To date, they have 19 branches operating in a decentralized system. In 2007/08